

## Infection Precautions & General Information

Skin infections are common and somewhat contagious. They can occur anywhere on the skin, but most often appear on the neck, face, buttocks, and breasts. Carbuncles are clusters of boils that occur when the infection spreads through small tunnels underneath the skin. Both are caused by an infection, usually from Staphylococcus bacteria that begins in the hair follicle and bores into the skin's deeper layers.

### Frequent Signs & Symptoms:

- A domed nodule that is painful, tender and red and has pus on the surface. Boils can appear suddenly and ripen in 24 hours. They are usually 1-1/2 cm to 3 cm in diameter; some are larger.
- Fever (rare)
- Swelling of the closest lymph glands

### Risk Increases With:

- Poor nutrition
- Illness that has lowered resistance
- Diabetes mellitus
- Use of immunosuppressive drugs

### Expected Outcomes:

Without treatment, an infection may heal in 10-20 days or may worsen and require medical treatment. With treatment, the infection should heal in less time, symptoms will be less severe, and new infections should not appear. The pus that drains when an infection opens spontaneously may contaminate nearby skin, causing new boils.

### Possible Complications:

- The infection may enter the bloodstream and spread to other body parts
- Scarring may occur. Boils may recur.

## Treatment and Precautions of Future Infections

### General Measures:

- Diagnosis is usually determined by the appearance of red, inflamed swelling. A laboratory study may be made of the material from the boil.
- Doctor's treatment may include incision and drainage of the boil.
- You should not burst a boil as this may spread bacteria.
- Taking showers instead of baths reduces chances of spreading infection.
- Hibiclens soap may be recommended. You can buy it at the pharmacy without a prescription. Use it to wash from neck down. Never use on the face as it is toxic to eyes and ears.
- Relieve pain with gentle heat from warm-water soaks. Use 3-4 times daily for 20 minutes. Wash your hands carefully after touching the boil.
- Prevent the spread of boils by using clean towels only once or using paper towels and discarding them.
- Do not share towels.
- Discontinue using nylon puffs, buff puffs, or other reusable bath items.
- Frequently change your razor blade or use disposable razors.

### Medications:

- Antibiotics may be prescribed for the boil. Listed below are some of the side effects.
- Doxycycline can cause stomach upset so take with a meal and a full glass of water. It should not be taken by women who are pregnant or nursing.
- Bactrim can cause serious life-threatening allergic reactions. Do not take Bactrim if you are allergic to sulfa or sulphur. If you develop a skin rash, contact our office immediately. It should not be taken by women who are pregnant or nursing.
- Rifampin can cause your urine and other body secretions to become orange. Do not wear contact lenses while on Rifampin. Rifampin will interfere with birth control pills. You must use additional birth control methods such as condoms while on Rifampin and for one month following. It should not be taken by women who are pregnant or nursing.
- Some people carry the staph bacteria in their nose and other orifices. You may be instructed to apply mupirocin to your nose, belly button and buttocks. You should clean your hands before and after application. You should use a Q-tip and apply a small amount to each nostril 2 times a day for 5 days. Your doctor may also want you to treat under your nails and your anal area 2 times a day for 5 days.

Notify Our Office If:

- You or a family member has a boil
- The following occur during treatment
  - Symptoms don't improve in 3 to 4 days, despite treatment
  - New boils appear
  - Fever
  - Other family members develops boils
- New, unexplained symptoms develop. Drugs used in treatment may produce side effects.

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